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BY
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AALBORG UNIVERSITY
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CURRICULUM VITAE

Hans-Peter Y. Qvist studied sociology (BA and MA) at Aalborg University, Denmark. He was a research assistant at the Department of Sociology and Social Work and at the Centre for Mobility Research, Aalborg University prior to starting as a PhD fellow at the Department of Sociology and Social Work, Aalborg University. During his doctoral studies, he taught an MA level course Civil Society and Social Movements and supervised student projects that applied quantitative methods to study various sociological problems at both BA and MA level. During the summer of 2017, he visited the Center for Philanthropic Studies at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, where he was hosted by Professor Rene Bekkers.

At the Department of Sociology and Social Work, he is a member of the Centre for Analysis of Structural Transformations and New Orientations (CASTOR); a research group that focusses on issues of social solidarity and social differentiation. He is a member of the Research Network on Civil Society and Volunteering (CiFri). He is also member of the following international research networks: International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR), European Research Network on Philanthropy (ERNOP), and Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA).

His research interests are volunteering, immigration, and quantitative methods. His work has been published in *European Sociological Review*, *Acta Sociologica*, *Journal of Civil Society*, and *Dansk Sociologi* [Danish Sociology].

For an updated curriculum vitae and list of publications, please visit my personal website:

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

In light of the persistent social inequality in volunteering, this thesis provides novel evidence regarding the role of individual and social resources as causes and benefits of volunteering based on quantitative data of exceptionally high quality from Scandinavia. The thesis is based on five self-contained research papers, which are synthesized in these summary chapters.

Research paper 1 (Trends in Volunteering in Scandinavia) first described how volunteer participation and intensity have developed over the past three decades in Scandinavia. Moreover, it examined the extent to which socioeconomic and family life changes explain recent trends. The descriptive results suggested that the overall levels of participation in volunteering are high and stable in the Scandinavian countries, with a small upward trend. In international comparisons, the participation levels in all of the Scandinavian countries are high, but they are markedly higher in Norway and Sweden than they are in Denmark. In Sweden, the volunteers' contributions of time shows a slight upward trend, in Norway, contributions have remained stable, and Denmark has witnessed a decline during the last three decades. However, the explanatory analysis indicated that the gap in the levels of volunteering between Sweden and Norway on one hand and Denmark on the other hand cannot be attributed to socioeconomic or family life changes, as the gap is left unexplained by these factors.

Research paper 2 (The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004–2012) examined the extent to which an observed decline in volunteers' contributions of time is explained by weakening organizational attachment measured by the volunteers' propensities to be members of the organizations for which they volunteer when socioeconomic and family life changes are controlled for. The results suggest that approximately 20 percent of the decline in the volunteers' contributions of time can be attributed to an indirect effect through weakening organizational attachment. However, contrary to our hypothesis, the indirect effect of weakening organizational attachment is not transmitted through a decline in their propensity to serve on a board of directors. When viewed together these results indicate that the decline in volunteers' contributions of time can mainly be attributed to an increase in so-called "peripheral volunteers" who volunteer without organizational membership rather than a decline in contributed time from so-called "core volunteers" who serve on a board of directors.

Research paper 3 (Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark) examined the extent to which time spent on paid work complements or substitutes volunteering. The results suggest that time spent on paid work is not significantly associated with changes in volunteer participation, but for volunteers, working part-time compared to full-time is associated with increased volunteer hours, while working overtime compared to full-time is associated with decreased volunteer hours. This is also true

when important possible confounders, including occupational prestige and the availability of flexible working arrangements, are controlled for.

Research paper 4 (Secular and Religious Volunteering among Immigrants and Natives in Denmark) examined the extent to which differences in individual and social resources explain the gaps in secular and religious volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives in Denmark. The results suggest that natives are approximately 17 percentage points more likely to participate in secular volunteering compared to non-Western immigrants. However, over half of this participation gap in secular volunteering is explained by differences in individual and social resources. Moreover, the results suggest that non-Western immigrants are significantly more likely to participate in religious volunteering. However, this participation gap in religious volunteering is completely explained by the higher levels of religiosity found among non-Western immigrants compared to natives.

Research paper 5 ('The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life') examined the extent to which volunteers receive individual economic benefits from volunteering in Denmark. The results suggest that an additional year of volunteer work experience yields an economic return of approximately 3.7 percent for labor market entrants, but the returns from volunteer work experience decline as a function of professional labor market experience. On these grounds, my co-author and I argue that volunteer work experience can be helpful in terms of career advancement for labor market entrants and people in the early stages of their careers, but it is of no consequence for people with substantial professional labor market experience.

These summary chapters synthesize the results of the individual research papers and discuss the explanatory power of "the resource theory" regarding the persistent social inequality seen in volunteering. Based on rational choice theory, the resource theory explains the persistent social inequality in volunteering by arguing that volunteering is more attractive to "the resource rich" than "the resource poor" because it is less costly for individuals with high levels of individual and social resources to reap the same private benefits of volunteering.

However, I challenge this argument. Instead, based on empirical evidence that suggests that the resource poor receive greater actual benefits from volunteering if they volunteer, I argue that volunteering is more attractive to the resource poor than to the resource rich. I therefore argue that the forward-looking and benefit-oriented rationality that is implied by rational choice provides a too narrow conception of rationality in terms of explaining people's volunteering behavior because people seemingly choose to participate in volunteering, or choose not to, independent of the private benefits that may follow their choices. However, adding to the complexity of the argument, I also suggest that once the individual has made the decision to volunteer, the decision regarding the time spent volunteering appears to be primarily guided by rational considerations related to time constrains. To conclude the thesis, I discuss the policy implications of these novel theoretical insights.

DANSK RESUME

I lyset af den vedvarende sociale ulighed i frivilligt arbejde tilvejebringer denne afhandling ny viden om den rolle, individuelle og sociale ressourcer spiller som årsager til og fordele af frivilligt arbejde baseret på data af exceptionel høj kvalitet fra Skandinavien. Ph.d. afhandlingen er baseret på fem selvstændige forskningspapirer, som bliver syntetiseret i disse sammenfattende kapitler.

Forskningspapir 1 (Trends in Volunteering in Scandinavia) beskrev for det første, hvordan frivillig deltagelse og intensitet har udviklet sig over de seneste tre årtier i Skandinavien. Derudover undersøgte det, i hvilket omfang socioøkonomiske- og familielivsforandringer forklarer de seneste tendenser. De deskriptive resultater tydede på, at de overordnede niveauer af deltagelse i frivilligt arbejde er høje og stabile i de skandinaviske lande med en lille opadgående tendens. I international sammenligning er deltagelsesniveauerne høje i alle de skandinaviske lande, men de er markant højere i Norge og Sverige, end de er i Danmark. I Sverige viser de frivilliges tidsbidrag en svagt opadgående tendens, i Norge er bidragene forblevet stabile og Danmark har oplevet et fald i løbet af de seneste tre årtier. Den forklarende analyse indikerede imidlertid, at gabet i deltagelsesniveau mellem Sverige og Norge på den ene side og Danmark på den anden ikke kan tilskrives socioøkonomiske- eller familielivsforandringer, eftersom gabet forblev uforklaret af disse faktorer.

Forskningspapir 2 (The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004–2012) undersøgte, i hvilket omfang det observerede fald i de frivilliges tidsbidrag er forklaret af en svækkelse i organisationelle tilhørsforhold målt gennem et fald i de frivilliges tilbøjelighed til at være medlemmer af den forening, de arbejder frivilligt for, når socioøkonomiske- og familielivsforandringer er kontrolleret for. Resultaterne tyder på, at ca. 20 procent af faldet i de frivilliges tidsbidrag kan tilskrives en indirekte effekt gennem svækkelse af organisationelle tilhørsforhold. Men modsat vores hypotese, er den indirekte effekt af nedgangen i de frivilliges tilbøjelighed til at være medlemmer ikke transmitteret gennem en nedgang i deres tilbøjelighed til at sidde i bestyrelsen. Når disse resultater ses i sammenhæng indikerer de, at nedgangen i de frivilliges tidsbidrag primært kan tilskrives en stigning i såkaldte ”perifere frivillige”, som er frivillige uden organisationsmedlemskab snarere end en nedgang i bidraget tid fra såkaldte ”kernefrivillige”, som sidder i bestyrelserne.

Forskningspapir 3 (Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark) undersøgte, i hvilket omfang tid brugt på betalt arbejde komplementerer eller substituerer frivilligt arbejde. Resultaterne tyder på, at tid brugt på betalt arbejde ikke er signifikant forbundet med ændringer i frivillig deltagelse, men for frivillige er det at arbejde deltid sammenlignet med fuld tid signifikant forbundet med flere frivillig timer, mens det at arbejde overtid sammenlignet med fuld tid er signifikant forbundet med færre frivillig timer. Dette gælder også, når vigtige mulige mellemkommende variable inklusiv stillingsmæssig prestige og muligheden for fleksible arbejdsforhold er kontrolleret for.

Forskningspapir 4 (Secular and Religious Volunteering Among Immigrants and Natives in Denmark) undersøgte, i hvilket omfang forskelle i individuelle- og sociale ressourcer forklarer gabene i sekulært og religiøst frivilligt arbejde mellem ikke-vestlige indvandrere og personer med dansk oprindelse. Resultaterne tyder på, at personer med dansk oprindelse er ca. 17 procentpoint mere tilbøjelige til at deltage i sekulært frivilligt arbejde sammenlignet med ikke-vestlige indvandrere. Over halvdelen af dette deltagelsesgab i sekulært frivilligt arbejde er imidlertid forklaret af forskelle i individuelle- og sociale ressourcer. Derudover tyder resultaterne på, at ikke-vestlige indvandrere er signifikant mere tilbøjelige til at deltage i religiøst frivilligt arbejde. Dette deltagelsesgab i religiøst frivilligt arbejde er imidlertid fuldstændig forklaret af de højere niveauer af religiøsitet, som man finder blandt ikke-vestlige indvandrere sammenlignet med personer med dansk oprindelse.

Forskningspapir 5 (The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life) undersøgte i hvilket omfang frivillige opnår individuelle økonomiske fordele på grund af frivilligt arbejde i Danmark. Resultaterne tyder på, at et ekstra års frivilligt arbejde giver et økonomisk afkast på ca. 3.7 procent for folk, der træder ind på arbejdsmarkedet, men afkastet af erfaring fra frivilligt arbejde falder som funktion af professionel arbejdsmarkedserfaring. På den baggrund argumenterer min medforfatter og jeg for, at erfaring fra frivilligt arbejde kan være hjælpsomt i forhold til at fremme karrieren for folk, der træder ind på arbejdsmarkedet og for folk, der befinder sig i de tidligere stadier af deres karriere, men at det ikke er virksomt for folk med betydelig professional arbejdsmarkedserfaring.

Disse sammenfattende kapitler syntetiserer resultaterne fra de individuelle forskningspapirer og diskuterer ”ressourceteoriens” forklaringskraft i forhold til at forklare den vedvarende sociale ulighed i frivilligt arbejde. Baseret på rational choice teori forklarer resourceteorien den vedvarende sociale ulighed i frivilligt arbejde ved at argumentere for, at frivilligt arbejde er mere attraktivt for ”de ressource-rige” fremfor ”de ressource-svage”, fordi det er mindre omkostningsfyldt for individer med høje niveauer af individuelle- og sociale ressourcer at høste de samme individuelle fordele ved frivilligt arbejde.

Jeg udfordrer imidlertid dette argument. I stedet, baseret på empirisk evidens, som tyder på, at de ressource-svage opnår større fordele, hvis de arbejder frivilligt, argumenterer jeg for, at frivilligt arbejde er mere attraktivt for de ressource-svage end for de ressource-rige. Jeg argumenterer derfor for, at den fremadrettede og fordelsorienterede rationalitet, som rational choice indebærer, bidrager med en for snæver begrebsliggørelse af rationalitet i forhold til at forklare folks frivilligadfærd, da folk tilsyneladende vælger at deltage i frivilligt arbejde eller vælger ikke at gøre det, uafhængigt af de personlige fordele, som kan følge deres handlinger. Bidragende til kompleksiteten i argumentet foreslår jeg dog også, at når individet har truffet beslutningen om at deltage i frivilligt arbejde, er beslutningen om tidsforbrug tilsyneladende primært styret af rationelle overvejelser om tidsbegrænsninger. Som afslutning på ph.d.-afhandlingen diskuterer jeg de policy-implikationer, disse nye teoretiske indsigter giver anledning til.

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The production of research is a collective effort. As a result, I owe thanks to many people. First, I want to thank my first supervisor, Lars Skov Henriksen. This thesis would not have been finished, let alone started, had Lars not introduced me to civil society research and guided me through the jungle of academia. I also want to thank Lars for always sharing his knowledge and experience when needed (which was often!). It has been, and is, a pleasure to work with you at a professional and personal level.

I also want to thank my second supervisor, Anders Holm, who assessed my MA thesis and subsequently agreed to serve as the second supervisor for my thesis. Before getting to know Anders, I feared that his methodological insights would kill my ideas. However, as I got to know Anders, I realized that he was not as “scary” as I thought—and he is always open to new ideas before challenging them methodologically.

I also wish to thank all members of my research group, CASTOR, which welcomed me into the group in an excellent manner. In my view, CASTOR not only stands for high quality research but also for an intellectually inclusive research culture that is open to novel ideas and open to new people. Presenting one’s novel but at times intellectually premature ideas in CASTOR is always a challenging but nevertheless constructive and encouraging experience.

I also want to thank Rene Bekkers, who welcomed me for two months at the Center for Philanthropic Studies at Vrije University (VU) Amsterdam. If not for my family, I would have loved to stay at VU Amsterdam for a longer period of time. However, the time I had there was instructive, and many of arguments in the thesis owe thanks to the comments of Rene and others at VU Amsterdam.

Finally, I want to thank my wife and colleague, Jeevitha, who has patiently supported me during the ups and downs of academic writing—and for taking care of our first-born son, Samuel, at the time when I was busy finishing my work. I love you both dearly—and look forward to a baby girl being brought into our family.

RESEARCH PAPERS AND THEIR PUBLICATION STATUS

Besides this summary report, the dissertation comprises five self-contained research papers listed below along with their publication status.

Research paper 1: Qvist, H. P. Y. et al. (forthcoming). Trends in Volunteering in Scandinavia. In: Henriksen, L. S., Strømness K., Svedberg, L., *Civic Engagement in Scandinavia*. Springer.

Reseach paper 2: Qvist, H. P. Y., Henriksen, L. S., and Fridberg, T. (2018). The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004–2012. *European Sociological Review*, **34**, 589–601.

Research paper 3: Qvist, H. P. Y. (manuscript). Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark. Unpublished manuscript.

Research paper 4: Qvist, H. P. Y. (2018). Secular and Religious Volunteering Among Immigrants and Natives in Denmark. *Acta Sociologica*, **61**, 202–218.

Research paper 5: Qvist, H. P. Y. and Munk, M. D. (2018). The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life. *European Sociological Review*, **34**, 198–210.

Other Relevant Publications (in Danish)

Qvist, H. P. Y. (2015). Deltagelse i frivilligt arbejde og tidsforbrug på frivilligt arbejde: To sider af samme sag? [Participation in Volunteering and Time Use for Volunteering: Two Sides of the Same Coin?] *Dansk Sociologi*, **26**, 53–72.

Frederiksen, M. and Qvist, H. P. Y. (2015). Frivillighed blandt ældre: Aktiv aldring i civilsamfundet [Volunteering among the Old: Active Aging in Civil Society]. In P. H. Jensen, and T. Rostgaard (red.), *Det aldrende samfund: Udfordringer og nye muligheder*.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In times otherwise characterized by economic and political turmoil, there is a remarkable consensus between left- and right-wing politicians in the United States and Europe that civic engagement, particularly volunteering, is all to the good. However, this has not always been the case. During the welfare state epoch of the 1960s and 1970s, left-wing politicians argued that the voluntary sector was an obstacle to securing adequate, reliable, and professional services for all. This discourse was particularly powerful in state-friendly societies, such as those of the Scandinavian countries (Henriksen and Bundesen, 2004), but similar arguments were also present in the United States and other European countries. However, in countries with liberal welfare regimes, such as the United States, the argument was often the other way around, namely that a large comprehensive welfare state would substitute private civic engagement (Musick and Wilson, 2008). Thus, historically, both left-wing and right-wing politicians have taken advantage of the idea of a substitutional relationship between the public and the voluntary sector to argue in favor of policies that aim to reduce the size of one of the sectors depending on their political ideology.

However, due to carefully designed comparative empirical studies, we now know that a large public sector does not lead to a small voluntary sector or vice versa (Salamon, Sokolowski and Haddock, 2017). Rather, the development of a large public sector and the development of a large voluntary sector often go hand in hand. The Scandinavian countries are probably the most illuminating example of this complementary relationship as they are characterized by a large public sector as well as a large voluntary sector (Henriksen, Strømsnes and Svedberg, forthcoming; Selle *et al.*, forthcoming).

Against this background, earlier debates about the pros and cons of a large voluntary sector has been replaced with a firm conviction among politicians and policy makers that a large voluntary sector is a panacea capable of solving a multitude of societal problems. In particular, the voluntary sector is often portrayed as a safeguard against declining social cohesion in Western societies. The most influential proponent of this position is Robert D. Putnam (1993, 2000, 2007) who argues that associational life is a crucial component in securing social cohesion and in making democracy work because associations constitute a social arena where people from different ethnic, social, and political backgrounds are brought together face-to-face enabling the formation of social capital defined as "…connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19).

In addition to the positive effect of associational life on social capital that has been the focus of attention in political science and sociology (Warren, 2001; Stolle and Hooghe, 2005), Putnam's reintroduction of the role of associational life in creating social capital has also sparked the imagination of a great number of scholars from other fields, including economics, epidemiology, and criminology. Thus, associational life and social capital have been linked to a large number of positive outcomes, including, for example, better mental, physical, and self-rated health (Almedom and Glandon, 2008; Kim, Subramanian and Kawachi, 2008), economic growth and prosperity (Whiteley, 2000), and reduced crime rates (Buonanno, Montolio and Vanin, 2009).

However, Putnam's concept of social capital, and his theoretical ideas about the role of associational life in its creation, have received fierce critique. Accordingly, the content and applicability of the concept of social capital remains disputed (Portes, 1998; Paldam, 2000; Bjørnskov and Sønderskov, 2013), the empirical evidence in favor of social capital's alleged benefits remains questionable (Portes and Vickstrom, 2011), and the mechanism of face-to-face interaction through which Putnam connects associational life with the formation of social capital remains contradicted by some empirical evidence (Wollebæk and Selle, 2002). Nevertheless, in spite of these criticisms, justified or not, there is little doubt that the central place of associational life in Putnam's theory of social capital has played a crucial role in bringing the vitality of the voluntary sectors to the forefront of the political agenda in the United States and in Europe (Stolle and Hooghe, 2005).

Today, political effort has therefore turned toward stimulating the voluntary sector and, in particular, toward mobilizing a greater proportion of the populations to undertake volunteer work. A Scandinavian example of such mobilizing efforts is the development of national volunteering strategies and the invention and institutionalization of volunteer centers in all of the Scandinavian countries, with one of the main aims being to expand the volunteer work force by attracting new volunteers (Lorentzen and Henriksen, 2014).

However, social policies aimed at stimulating the voluntary sector are often based on the erroneous assumption that the voluntary sector, unlike other social arenas, such as the educational system and the paid labor market, are exempt from social inequality. However, more than half a century of sociological research conducted across very different countries and time periods testifies to the opposite. An impressive number of studies thus show a remarkable empirical regularity, namely that volunteering is more common among people with high levels of individual and social resources—i.e. educational level, occupational status, income, social network ties, health, and free time—compared to people with fewer resources (for reviews of the litterature; see Smith, 1975, 1994, Wilson, 2000, 2012; Smith and Wang, 2016).

The extensive literature on the persistent social inequality in volunteering highlights two important reservations against blind faith in associational life as a panacea capable of restoring and maintaining the social cohesion of our challenged societies. First, the literature questions the extent to which observed positive statistical associations between volunteering and various desirable outcomes reflect causal effects or selection effects. More specifically, because volunteers, compared to non-volunteers, are already more privileged in terms of individual and social resources before they start to volunteer, it questions the extent to which volunteer participation is the cause of improved health, happiness, trust worthiness, and reduced criminal behavior (Kamerāde, 2015). Although positive statistical associations between volunteering and desirable outcomes appear to support such a causal link, these statistical associations may also be due to selection effects. Second, even if the statistical associations to some extent reflect causal effects, the persistent social inequality in volunteering questions the extent to which participation in volunteering will decrease or increase social inequality because people who already possess high levels of individual and social resources will be better equipped to reap the alleged benefits of volunteering compared to people with fewer resources.

1.1. RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

In view of the above, the aim of this thesis is to shed new light on possible explanations for the persistent social inequality in volunteering. Toward this aim, I will use quantitative survey data of exceptionally high quality from the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) to provide novel evidence of the role of individual and social resources as causes and benefits of volunteering. Notably, Denmark will be given empirical attention because the Danish Volunteer Survey contains an embedded panel component that, when merged with annual administrative register data at the individual level, presents a uniquely reliable data source.

Besides these summary chapters, the thesis is structured as five self-contained research papers that will answer five interrelated research questions. The first research question concerns the role of individual and social resources in explaining aggregate trends in volunteering over time in the Scandinavian countries. Thus, my first research question reads:

1) How has volunteer participation and intensity developed over the past three decades in Scandinavia, and to what extent can socioeconomic and family life changes explain recent trends?

Accordingly, the purpose of the first research paper is twofold. First, it provides a descriptive account of how volunteer participation and intensity has developed in Scandinavia during the last three decades. Second, it explores the extent to which changes in individual and social resources explain these developments.

Next, after addressing these relatively broad research questions, I move on to address a narrower research question based on a curious empirical observation about the development in volunteer participation and intensity in Denmark, namely that the volunteers' contributions of time appear to have declined in a period where participation rates have risen. To explain this curious observation, my co-authors and I first looked to the Anglo American literature because a similar development in volunteerism seems to have taken place there. Similar to the development in Denmark, a decline in volunteers' contributions of time had co-occurred with a rise in participation rates during the period between the mid 1960s and the late 1990s in the United States (Andersen, Curtis and Grabb, 2006). However, previous explanations for the development seen in the United States during this period focused on possible changes in individual socioeconomic resources (Rotolo and Wilson, 2004) or changes in social resources due to family life changes (Andersen, Curtis and Grabb, 2006), which both seemed to be unlikely candidates to explain the trends in recent years in Denmark. Instead, my co-authors and I came up with a different hypothesis inspired by previous work on the weakening attachments between volunteers and organizations in recent times (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Wollebæk and Selle, 2003; Hustinx, 2005, 2010; Tranvik and Selle, 2007). Accordingly, my second research question reads:

2) To what extent is the observed decline in volunteers' contributions of time in recent years in Denmark explained by weakening organizational attachment rather than socioeconomic and family life changes?

After addressing these two research questions about aggregate trends in volunteering over time, I move on to examine the extent to which time spent on paid work causes people to increase or decrease their levels of volunteerism. Thus, my third research question reads:

3) To what extent does time spent on paid work substitute or complement volunteering at the individual level in Denmark?

Next, in light of the rapid and large scale migration that Denmark, like other European welfare states, has witnessed during the last three decades, I shift attention toward the inequality in voluntary participation between non-Western immigrants and natives in Denmark. Therefore, my fourth research question reads:

4) To what extent can differences in individual and social resources explain the gaps in secular and religious volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives in Denmark?

Finally, because one of the dominant theories regarding the causes of social inequality in volunteering suggests that people's volunteering behavior is related to the benefits of volunteering, I shift attention toward one of the alleged benefits of volunteering, namely the effect of volunteer work experience on occupational achievement measured by wages. Thus, my fifth research questions reads:

5) To what extent do volunteers receive individual economic benefits from volunteering in Denmark?

By answering these five research questions, I make two important contributions to the literature. First, I contribute empirically informed sociological knowledge to subfields of the sociology of volunteering, i.e. trends over time, causes of volunteerism, immigrant volunteering, and the benefits of volunteering. Second, in concluding these summary chapters, I synthesize the insights gained from the individual research papers. Based on this synthesis, I challenge the explanatory power of the resource theory of volunteering, which is the dominant sociological theory regarding the causes of social inequality in volunteering. I also provide some suggestions as to how the current state of sociological research on volunteering might be improved.

1.2. THE RESOURCE THEORY OF VOLUNTEERING: ASSUMPTIONS AND EVIDENCE

The resource theory of volunteering[1] aims to explain the empirical regularity that people with higher levels of individual and social resources (i.e. educational level, occupational status, income, social network ties, health, and free time) are more likely to volunteer compared to people with fewer of these resources. The foundation of the resource theory was formed in a seminal article by Wilson and Musick (1997a), but the assumptions of the theory are elaborated in greater detail in Musick and Wilson's joint book (2008). Finally, my interpretation of the resource theory is also pieced together based on empirically oriented research articles and literature reviews (Wilson and Musick, 1997b, 1998, 1999, 2003; Janoski, Musick and Wilson, 1998; Musick, Wilson and Bynum, 2000; Wilson, 2012, 2000, Rotolo and Wilson, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007; Mustillo, Wilson and Lynch, 2004; Son and Wilson, 2012, 2015).

It is worth noting that at the time of its launch in the late 1990s, Wilson and Musick (1997a) did not themselves label their work "the resource theory of volunteering". Instead, they referred to it as an "integrated theory of volunteering." This label presumably signified that the theory essentially pieced together and integrated existing sociological literature on volunteering with the dominant status theory as a particularly strong source of inspiration (Lemon, Palisi and Jacobson, 1972; Smith, 1975, 1994). However, by the time of their 2008 book, Musick and Wilson no longer referred to their work as "an integrated theory" but as "a resource approach," and in Wilson's latest joint work with Son, he himself has adopted the label "the resource theory of volunteering" (Son and Wilson, 2012, 2015). However, other contemporary scholars of volunteering refer to "resource *theories* of volunteering" rather than "*the* resource theory" in singular (Einolf and Chambré, 2011). This presumably signifies that the resource theory is considered a shared collection of ideas rather than a specific theory. This is reasonable in the sense that the resource theory is often applied in an ad hoc and eclectic manner in empirical work. However, I argue that by referring to the resource theory in plural, the resource theory is equated with the empirical regularity that it aims to explain. The distinctive trait of a theory is not the empirical regularity from which it takes its point of departure but the falsifiable explanation it provides for why the empirical regularity exists (Popper, 2005 [1934]). As I will

[1] The resource theory is also sometimes referred to as the resource-capital theory (Smith and Wang, 2016).

elaborate below, the resource theory does provide such an explanation based on rational choice theory. I therefore refer to "the resource theory" in singular.

The resource theory starts by defining volunteering as a productive activity much like any other form of work, except it is unpaid (Wilson and Musick, 1997a, p. 695). As emphasized by Wilson (2000, p. 216), this implies that: "…volunteering is simply defined as an activity that produces goods and services at below market rate; no reference is made to the reasons for activity." By defining volunteering in terms of its productive nature rather than, for example, the motivations that underlie it, or its recreational aspects, the resource theory separates itself from other theories of volunteering, namely pro-social behavior theories, leisure theories, and the dominant status theory. Because no reference is made to reasons for activity, the resource theory sets itself apart from pro-social behavior theories that emphasize the altruistic nature of volunteering and thus seek to identify values or personality characteristics that explain why people choose to engage in activities that help others (Penner. et al., 2005; Wittek and Bekkers, 2015). Moreover, by emphasizing the productive nature of volunteering rather than its recreational aspects, the resource theory distinguishes itself from leisure theories of volunteering, i.e. those theories that emphasize that the choice to volunteer can be understood as a lifestyle choice among other choices regarding the allocation of one's free time to various enjoyable activities (Stebbins, 1996; Robinson et al., 2016). Finally, by arguing that individual and social resources act as inputs that make it easier to face the demands of volunteering, it breaks with the dominant status theory that argues that volunteering is part of an ensemble of characteristics related to power, wealth, and prestige (Lemon, Palisi and Jacobson, 1972; Smith, 1994; Smith and Wang, 2016).

To develop their explanation for the persistent social inequality in volunteering, Musick and Wilson (2008, pp. 113–114) draw on rational choice theory[2]. The resource theory is thus grounded in the assumption that rational actors would not contribute services to others unless they received something in exchange or profited by the transaction (Musick and Wilson, 2008, p. 114). In other words, the resource theory assumes that individuals make *intentional decisions* about their volunteering behavior based on their assessment of its *costs* and its *benefits* (Wilson, 2000, p. 219). However, despite the fact that the *causal agent* of the resource theory is the assumption that people pursue private benefits, the nature or distribution of these benefits plays only a trivial role in the resource theory. Instead, the resource theory focusses on factors such as educational level, occupational status, income, social network ties, health, and free time that are assumed to lower the costs of volunteering because they act as inputs that make it easier to face the demands of volunteering.

In order to explain why people with higher levels of resources are more likely to volunteer than people with fewer resources *solely* based on differences in individual and social resources between individuals, Musick and Wilson (2008) make the auxiliary assumption that the benefits of volunteering are the same or fixed. This

[2] For an introduction to sociological rational choice theory, see Hechter and Kanazawa (1997).

assumption is explicated when Musick and Wilson exemplify the logic of the resource theory in the following way:

"*Given the same rewards*, volunteering is more attractive to the resource-rich than to the resource-poor. If volunteer work demands money, the rich will find it easier to do; if it demands knowledge and "civic skills," the well educated will be less challenged by it; if it requires heavy lifting, the physically healthy will find it more tolerable; if it is very time consuming, those with "time on their hands" will find it easier to bear the burden. In other words, the resource-rich are more likely to "profit" from doing volunteer work." (Musick and Wilson, 2008, p. 113) [my emphasis].

Because this auxiliary assumption that people receive the same rewards or benefits from volunteering appears to be a strong and potentially critical assumption, one would expect the above quotation to be followed by a clarification of what exactly is meant by "given the same rewards…". However, to the best of my knowledge, Musick and Wilson have never clarified the exact meaning of this auxiliary assumption, discussed its implications, nor justified it empirically. Based on a logical assessment of its possible meanings, I argue that the auxiliary assumption implies that the benefits of volunteering, irrespective of their exact nature, must share two important characteristics. First, the benefits of volunteering must be *uniform*, i.e. whatever the benefits of volunteering are, they do not vary significantly between individuals residing in specific areas or belonging to certain social groups. Second, the benefits of volunteering must be *stable*, i.e. whatever the benefits of volunteering are, they do not vary significantly over time.

The *same rewards assumption* of the resource theory is very similar to the *uniform and stable preferences assumption* of which the economists and leading rational choice theorists Stigler and Becker (1977) were strong proponents. As enthusiastically proclaimed by Stigler and Becker (1977, p. 89), the great advantage of making this assumption is "…that *all* changes in behavior … are explained by changes in prices and incomes, precisely the variables that organize and give power to economic analysis" (Stigler and Becker, 1977, p. 89) [the authors' own emphasis]. This is very similar to the argument made by the resource theory—except for the fact that prices and incomes are expanded to include individual and social resources at large.

The *uniform and stable preferences assumption* is often accepted in neoclassical economics, in part because it readily leads to empirical models in which individuals are assumed to pursue uniform and stable goals within set and readily measurable opportunity or budget constraints. However, for many core problems within economics, the uniform and stable preferences assumption is arguably not only practical because it reduces empirical complexity, but also largely realistic. For example, it is not unrealistic to assume that a durable goal shared by all firms across time is to maximize their profits. Thus, in addressing many problems common to economics, there are strong arguments in favor of the usefulness of the uniform and stable preferences assumption.

However, Becker and other so-called "economic imperialists" (Hirshleifer, 1985) did not only argue that the assumption was useful in economics. They also argued that *the uniform and stable preference assumption* was useful when studying *all* types of human behavior, including problems traditionally studied within sociology, political science, anthropology, and law (Becker, 1976). Yet, Granovetter (1985, 2017) argues that it is often problematic to make a *uniform and stable preferences assumption* when studying strictly economic behavior because even market behavior is affected by economic and social institutions—and it is even more problematic when studying non-market behavior.

Musick and Wilson's (2008) explicit adherence to the principles of rational choice in their 2008 book also seems to mark an important shift in their own scholarship. For example, Wilson and Musick (1999, p. 167) claimed in one of their earlier research articles that the: "…benefits [of volunteering] are usually unintended consequences of behavior that is motivated not by extrinsic but intrinsic rewards." However, it is difficult to see how this earlier claim can be reconciled with rational choice theory because people obviously cannot base forward-looking and benefit-oriented rational decisions on *unintended* consequences. Moreover, their recent adoption of rational choice theory brings to the foreground processes in which individuals intentionally weigh the costs and benefits of volunteering, while their earlier ground breaking joint work with Janoski receded into the background. More specifically, it is unclear how earlier work on the intergenerational transmission of volunteering—which shows that the propensity to volunteer is intergenerationally transmitted through family socialization and status transmission—is reconcilable with rational choice theory (Janoski and Wilson, 1995; Mustillo, Wilson and Lynch, 2004; Bekkers, 2007). It is also unclear how Janoski, Musick, and Wilson's (1998) earlier work on volunteering as unconscious habitual behavior that grows out of practice and experience is compatible with their recent adoption of rational choice.

However, despite the fact that the realism of the assumptions of rational choice has been fiercely critiqued in other areas of sociology, such as the sociology of marriage and family (England, 1989), religion (Bruce, 1993), and time allocation (Heath, 1976), and despite the fact that the assumptions of rational choice appears to be at odds with earlier empirical findings in the sociology of volunteering, potential critics of the resource theory have remained surprisingly silent. This raises the question of how Musick and Wilson (2008) have succeeded in introducing the assumptions of rational choice into the sociology of volunteering without attracting the attention of potential critics. In my view, there are at least three reasons for this curiosity. First, although resource theory is based on strong and perhaps even dubious assumptions, it leads to accurate predictions about the individual and social resources that increase people's propensity to volunteer, which can be easily verified empirically. Furthermore, since the resource theory leads to accurate predictions, few have found it worthwhile to address potential weaknesses in its *explanation* for why these empirical regularities exists[3]. Second, sociological theories of volunteering are arguably biased toward favoring theories of the “covering-law” type, such as the resource theory, that point to factors that are assumed to be universally related to volunteering behavior (Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010). This bias toward covering-law type theories is at the expense of context and process oriented middle-range theories. Third, and not particularly scientifically grounded, *the same rewards assumption* has probably slipped the attention of many scholars of volunteering because it only appears explicitly once—in an interposed sentence on page 113 in a 663 pages long book (Musick and Wilson, 2008, p. 113).

Following this theoretical discussion of the assumptions of the resource theory, I will provide a brief account the state of the art of research on individual and social resources as causes and benefits of volunteerism. I will first discuss research on individual and social resources as causes of volunteerism and then proceed to discuss benefits of volunteering. In both sections, I focus on providing a broad outline of key outstanding issues in the literature rather than providing an exhaustive list of references. For detailed accounts of state of the art research findings on the particular research questions I have outlined in section 1.1., I encourage the reader to refer to the self-contained research papers.

Empirical Evidence of Individual and Social Resources as Causes of Volunteerism

A tremendous amount of empirical attention has been paid to the causes of participation in volunteering. The existing literature is thus awash with studies that examine the extent to which one or several resource factors, such as educational level, occupational status, income, health, free time, family ties, and informal social network ties, are positively statistically associated with participation in volunteering. The impressive number of studies that have been conducted over the years leave little if any doubt that these resource factors are indeed positively associated with participation in volunteering.

Yet, despite the impressive bulk of evidence, there are important issues that remain weakly addressed. First, it can be argued that the existing literature has focused in too much of a one-sided manner on the causes of volunteer participation compared to the causes of volunteering intensity, referring to the amount of time that the volunteers contribute (Forbes and Zampelli, 2011). As a result, our knowledge about the resource factors that are associated with participation in volunteering is much more solidly grounded in empirical evidence than our knowledge about the factors that are associated with volunteering intensity (Forbes and Zampelli, 2011; Qvist, 2015).

[3] An important exception is found in Smith and Wang (2016), which presents a potent but not itself unproblematic critique of the resource theory. I provide a through discussion of Smith and Wang’s (2016) critique in section 4.1.

Second, a great deal of the previous evidence is based on cross-sectional surveys that tell nothing about aggregate changes over time. In relation to aggregate changes in volunteerism over time, recent studies have revealed that the effects of particular resource factors vary between national contexts and over time. For example, Gesthuizen and Scheepers (2012) suggest that there a stark differences in the effects of educational level on volunteer participation between countries. One of the suggested reasons for these differences is that a low educational level is a strong signal of incompetence in countries with a high popular educational level (Gesthuizen and Scheepers, 2012). Another example is Dekker and van Ingen (2011), who suggest that people with higher education in the Netherlands in 1975 were much more likely to participate in volunteering compared to people with lower education, whereas by 2005, the educational differences in volunteer participation were no longer significant. Empirical results such as those above are important because they suggest that the role of individual and social resources as causes of volunteer participation and intensity depend on context and change over time.

Third, because studies that use panel data are scarce within the field of volunteering, we know little about the extent to which statistical associations between resource factors and volunteerism reflect causal effects or selection effects—the latter referring to the fact that people who choose to volunteer differ from non-volunteer on variables that are not observed. However, studies are starting to emerge that suggest that the causal effects of well-known resource factors are markedly smaller than that suggested by statistical associations from cross-sectional or pooled cross-sectional studies. For example, Lancee and Radl (2014) suggest, based on the German Socioeconomic Panel Survey, that the effect of graduating with higher education degree is small and insignificant, implying that a large part of the positive statistical associations between educational level and volunteer participation found in previous studies may be due to unobserved differences between people with high and low educational levels.

Empirical Evidence on the Benefits of Volunteering: Are they Really Uniform and Stable?

There is a large body of literature concerned with the various individual benefits of volunteering. According to literature reviews by Wilson and Musick (1999) and Wilson (2000), suggested individual benefits include increased political participation, increased generalized trust, a decreased risk of engaging in anti-social or criminal behavior, better mental and physical health, and increased occupational achievement.

Again, an impressive number of studies suggest positive associations between participation in volunteering and various desirable outcome variables; however, the literature suffers shortcomings. First, most of the evidence in favor of the alleged benefits of volunteering is based on cross-sectional studies (Enroljas and Sivesind, 2018). However, recent longitudinal studies have questioned the extent to which these associations can be given a causal interpretation. For example, several recent longitudinal studies that use panel data from various countries, including the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Germany, suggest that the positive association between volunteer participation and generalized social trust observed in several studies can to a large extent be attributed to selection into volunteering based on unobserved characteristics rather than causation (Bekkers, 2012; van Ingen and Bekkers, 2015). Another example is a recent longitudinal study from Denmark, which revealed that volunteer participation was not significantly associated with employability once unobserved factors were accounted for using an instrumental variables strategy (Petrovski, Dencker-Larsen and Holm, 2017).

Second, the existing literature indicates that the uniformity and stability of the individual benefits of volunteering are highly questionable. For example, Musick, Herzog, and House (1999) found that participation in volunteering had a protective effect on mortality for older adults but more so for respondents who reported low levels of social interaction. Another example is Morrow-Howell et al. (2003) who found that participation in volunteering had a positive effect on well-being for older adults, but the effect was more pronounced for disadvantaged older adults, including older adults with functional limitations and of more advanced age. Moreover, previous research also suggests that volunteering is particularly beneficial in terms of securing labor market integration for immigrants, who are on average disadvantaged in terms of individual and social resources compared to natives in most countries (Handy and Greenspan, 2009; Greenspan, Walk and Handy, 2018). When viewed together, these studies suggest that the *actual* benefits of participation in volunteering are greater for people with lower initial levels of individual and social resources. Moreover, it is highly probable that individuals with the greatest *potential* benefits are found among individuals who are less likely to participate because they have low levels of individual and social resources (Enroljas and Sivesind, 2018, p. 118). In addition, Morrow-Howell, Hong, and Tang (2009) found that low-education and low-income groups also report higher levels of *perceived* benefits of volunteering. Moreover, Souto-Otero and Shields (2016) suggest that the popular acceptance that people engage in volunteering to reap individual benefits varies between countries. For example, it is more socially acceptable to volunteer to reap the individual benefits of volunteering in countries with fewer opportunities for increasing one's skills by other means (Souto-Otero and Shields, 2016).

Third, the above evidence questions the extent to which the actual and perceived benefits of volunteering can realistically be assumed to be the same, i.e. uniform and time stable. However, another question concerns the extent to which individuals intentionally weigh these alleged benefits against the costs when they make decisions about their levels of volunteerism. This question is extremely difficult to address empirically. However, if longitudinal data are available, sociologists have proposed ways to examine empirically the extent to which people act based on a weighing of the costs and benefits of alternative lines of actions. For example, drawing on the work of Piketty, Breen (1999) suggests that rational individuals modify their beliefs in light of experience. Based on this idea, it has, for example, been shown that parents adjust their investments in their children's education based on the returns of those investments measured by the children's performance in school (Hjorth-Trolle, 2018). The fact that the examined parents seem to rationally adjust their actions in light of the consequences of their previous actions supports the idea that they in fact act in the forward-looking and instrumental sense that is implied by rational choice. However, to the best of my knowledge, similar evidence has yet to come about within the sociology of volunteering. This questions the extent to which individuals' decisions about their levels of volunteerism can be explained by rational choice, as argued by the resource theory (Musick and Wilson, 2008).

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Previous studies on volunteering often draw strong conclusions based on less-than ideal survey data (Wilson, 2005). As a consequence, many previous studies suffer from a number of shortcomings. First, research on volunteering is awash with studies that present associational evidence based on cross-sectional data. However, as often recognized, the knowledge that can be gained from these studies is limited (Wilson, 2005). Second, in cases where the survey data includes a time dimension, they often comprise pooled cross-sections. Although much more can be learned from pooled cross-sections than from cross-sections at one point in time, they are uninformative about dynamics at the individual level, which limits their potential for causal analysis. Third, the few surveys that collect information about volunteer participation and intensity from the same individuals over time, i.e. panel surveys, often suffer considerably from panel drop-out over time, also known as *attrition* (Abraham, Helms and Presser, 2009; Hermansen, 2018). This is a problem that has increased in magnitude in recent years because survey response rates have dropped significantly over time (Vehovar and Beullens, 2018).

The shortcomings of previous quantitative sociological studies not only concerns its reliance on less than ideal survey data but also extends to the methods used to analyze these data. Often, modelling assumptions are superfluously discussed or not discussed at all; and after the analysis has been carried out, the results are almost never subjected to robustness checks. As a result of this lack of attention to modelling assumptions and thus the robustness of the findings, strong conclusions may have been drawn based on weak evidence.

In the following chapter, I discuss how I aim to address some of the methodological shortcoming of previous research. I begin by discussing the validity and reliability of the measures of volunteering that I use in the research papers. Next, I discuss how I utilize the strengths related to the unique opportunity in Denmark to merge high-quality survey data with highly reliable administrative register data at the individual level. I then move on to discuss how I utilize the strengths of different types of data, including pooled cross-sections, panel, and retrospective data, to address different research problems. I conclude the chapter by discussing how I use mediation analysis to uncover the mechanisms through which the explanatory variables transmit their effect on the outcome.

2.1. MEASURING VOLUNTEERING IN SURVEYS

Early research on volunteering was to a large extent concerned with measurement issues (Smith, 1975). One of the reasons why this literature is so extensive is that it is difficult to reach a common definition of volunteering because people in different countries use the term volunteering to refer to a multitude of different activities in their everyday lives (Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth, 1996; Cnaan *et al.*, 2011). It was difficult to compare the results because of definitional disagreements because of the reliance of unique questionnaires.

One of the most important advances for volunteering research was the launch of the John Hopkins University Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (JHP), which aimed to collect comparable data about the size and composition of the voluntary sectors in as many countries as possible (Salamon and Anheier, 1992, 1997; Salamon, Sokolowski and List, 2003; Salamon, Sokolowski and Haddock, 2017). The Danish Volunteer Survey, which I rely heavily on in this thesis, was first collected in 2004 as part of the large scale JHP project and was conducted again in 2012 (Koch-Nielsen et al., 2005; Fridberg and Henriksen, 2014).

Following the guidelines of the JHP project, the operational definition of volunteering used by the Danish Volunteering Survey was based on five characteristics. Volunteering is defined as an activity that:

- is unpaid (but compensation for expenses is allowed)
- is voluntary (i.e. it does not include labor market activation programs for example)
- is carried out in an organizational setting—most often a voluntary organization, but it could also be in a public or private setting.
- is beneficial to others rather than oneself or one's immediate family
- is active (i.e. membership of an organization is not adequate)

Besides providing a common definition of volunteering based on the above five points, a particularly important advance made by the JHP was the development of the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO), which is a standardized comparative instrument for measuring the different areas in which volunteering can be carried out (Salamon and Anheier, 1992). This is important for two reasons. First, it facilitates the investigation of diverging causes or trends within different areas of volunteering. Second, methodological research indicates that questionnaires that provide respondents with examples of activities that "count as volunteering" within different areas provide more accurate overall volunteer rates than surveys based on a single item. Moreover, the examples that are given to respondents ideally needs to be tailored to a specific national context without compromising comparability. Thus, much work was undertaken to tailor the JHP questionnaire to the specific Danish context (Ibsen and Habermann, 2005).

2.2. MERGING SURVEY AND REGISTER DATA AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

If we want to know about people's participation in volunteering, we have to ask them through surveys because voluntary participation and intensity are usually not registered beyond organizations' internal and confidential lists of information about their members. Given that the research on volunteering relies so heavily on survey data, it is troublesome that a number of developments over recent decades has brought into question the validity of survey data (Vehovar and Beullens, 2018). First, it has become increasingly difficult to coax people to participate in the surveys. As a result, we have witnessed a negative trend in survey participation rates across most European countries, including Denmark (Vehovar and Beullens, 2018). This is disturbing news, since methodological studies suggest that survey estimates of volunteer rates are inversely related to survey non-response because people who voluntarily respond to surveys are also more likely to participate in volunteer work (Abraham, Helms and Presser, 2009; Hermansen, 2018). The Danish Volunteer Survey is unfortunately not exempt from the general drop in response rates—the response rate has dropped from 75 percent in 2004 to 67 percent in 2012. Nevertheless, the response rate of The Danish Volunteer Survey is exceptionally high compared to most high quality general population surveys in Europe, which usually have response rates of 50–60 percent (Vehovar and Beullens, 2018).

Another problem related to a reliance on survey data is that important socioeconomic variables such as educational level, occupational status, and wages, are difficult to collect by surveys. Out of these three socioeconomic factors, educational level is probably the least problematic as long as a simple categorization is sufficient (e.g., no education, secondary education, or higher education). When given such broad categories, respondents should be able to report their highest level of education. However, occupational status or prestige is more difficult to collect because one would need to obtain exact job titles from respondents, which could potentially lead to confusion and misreporting. Moreover, this would lead to very large amounts of qualitative data, which can be difficult for researchers to post-classify. However, it is probably even more problematic to collect information about people's income levels or wages using surveys. This is because people are likely to misreport their incomes or wages—for example, people may confuse gross and net wages. They may also provide deliberately false answers because they want to keep their income or wages confidential, leading to a systematic measurement error; alternatively, they may simply refrain from answering the question, leading to systematic missing data (Moore, Stinson and Welniak, 2000). If not addressed, problems of systematic measurement and missing data question the results of even carefully undertaken and well-written studies.

One way to address the problems associated with the use of survey data is to combine or enrich them with data from other more reliable sources. In Denmark, a particularly attractive strategy is to merge data from surveys with data from administrative registers. This is possible because all persons in Denmark are required to hold a unique personal identification number, which government institutions use to store information about individuals for administrative purposes, such as tax returns, progress in the educational system, and household information (Pedersen, 2011). Many of these registers are collected and merged by Statistics Denmark for research purposes. Upon receiving ethical approval for a specific project from Statistics Denmark and the Danish Data Protection Agency, specific variables that are directly relevant to the project can be made available in anonymized form through remote access servers to authorized researchers working at authorized institutions. The raw data must be kept on the remote access servers at all times, and researchers are only allowed to take home aggregated results, such as means or regression coefficients, from which it is not possible under any circumstances to identify individuals.

The combination of survey data and administrative register data is very powerful, but the key outcome variables in volunteering research, i.e. volunteer participation and intensity, are unfortunately not available in the administrative registers. Nevertheless, information from administrative registers is highly valuable for volunteering research because possible socioeconomic confounding variables can be obtained and measured with greater accuracy and reliability. This is exemplified in research paper 3 (Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark), in which I am only able to control for occupational prestige because the survey data are merged with administrative register data about occupational status. However, the usefulness of data from administrative registers becomes particularly evident when the consequences of volunteering are under study. This is exemplified in research paper 5 (The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life), in which the number of years of volunteer work experience obtained from the survey is the explanatory variable and annual information on wages obtained from administrative registers is the outcome variable.

2.3. REPEATED CROSS-SECTIONAL, PANEL, AND RETROSPECTIVE DATA

Surveys with a time dimension are always preferable to cross-sections because they contain information about trends over time. However, in this thesis I use three different kinds of data with a time dimension, including pooled cross-sectional data, panel data, and retrospective survey data. Each of these types of data comes with its own set of strengths and weaknesses, which I discuss in the below.

Pooled Cross-sectional Data and Aggregate Trends over Time

To address the first two empirical research questions concerning trends in volunteering over time, I use pooled cross-sectional data from the Danish Volunteer Survey. This is the case in research paper 1 (Trends in Volunteering in Scandinavia), which is also merged with harmonized pooled cross-sections from Sweden and Norway. It is also the case in research paper 2 (The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004-2012), where the

Danish Volunteer Survey is treated as pooled cross-sectional data and is merged with data from administrative registers.

Pooled cross-sectional data are collected at multiple time points, but from different cross-sections of individuals at each time point. Pooled cross-sectional data are useful for addressing questions of trends in aggregate volunteer participation and intensity over time, but they are uninformative about changes at the individual level because, unlike panel data, the information is not collected from the same individuals. If panel attrition were nonexistent, panel data would, in principle, always be preferable to pooled cross-sectional data because questions about aggregate trends over time can also be answered with panel data. However, because the problem of panel attrition is always present in reality, pooled cross-sections are often more suitable for addressing questions about aggregate trends over time, as such data are more likely to remain representative of the population over time.

Panel Data, Individual Dynamics, and Causal Analysis

In contrast to pooled cross-sectional data, panel data are collected from the same individuals at multiple time points enabling the analysis of the extent to which a change in the explanatory variable is related to a change in the outcome variable at the individual level. Because changes in an explanatory factor can be related to changes in an outcome variable, panel data are more suitable for causal analysis than pooled cross-sectional data.

Overall, there are two different to approaches to analyzing changes at the individual level with panel data: *change score methods* and *the regressor variable method* (Allison, 1990; Finkel, 1995; Johnson, 2005). In the regressor variable method, measures for the outcome variable at a prior time point are included, along with other control variables, in regressions that predicts the outcome at a later time point. Based on two waves of panel data the below equation can be used to obtain results from the regressor variable method:

$$Y_{i2} = \alpha + \beta \boldsymbol{X}_i + Y_{i1} + \varepsilon_i \qquad (1)$$

Where $\boldsymbol{Y_{i2}}$ is the outcome of interest at Time 2, **X** is a vector of explanatory variables that may be included at Time 1, Time 2, or at both time points depending on the theory that is being tested, Y_{i1} is the outcome of interest at Time 1, and $\boldsymbol{\varepsilon_i}$ is an error term.

In change score methods, changes in the outcome over time, measured as the difference between the outcome at a later time point and an earlier time point, is predicted directly by the explanatory variables. With two waves of panel data, results based on the change score method can thus be obtained with the following general equation:

$$Y_{i2} - Y_{i1} = \alpha + \beta \boldsymbol{X}_i + \varepsilon_i' \qquad (2)$$

Where $Y_{i2} - Y_{i1}$ is the difference between the outcome at Time 1 and Time 2 and $\varepsilon_i' = \varepsilon_{i2} - \varepsilon_{i1}$. In the two-wave case, this is equivalent to the fixed effects pooled time series estimator (Johnson, 2005, p. 1063).

To comprehend the attraction of change score methods, it is useful to decompose the error term in Equation 2 into three components (Allison, 1990, p. 102): $\varepsilon_{it} = u_i + V_{it} + W_{it}$, where u_i is a time stable individual component, V_{it} is a period specific variation in the outcome, and W_{it} is a measurement error that varies randomly across individuals and time. The attraction of change score methods is that the time stable individual component is differenced out in Equation 2 because $\varepsilon_i' = u_i - u_i + V_{i2} - V_{i1} + W_{it} - W_{it}$. This implies that the explanatory factors $\boldsymbol{X_i}$ in Equation 2 are allowed to be correlated with any observed or unobserved time stable factors because these are differenced out of the equation. However, the period specific variation in the outcome V_{it} is not differenced out of the equation because it varies over time. Yet, in practical applications, this can easily be addressed by including indicators for the time point as control variables. Another attraction of change score methods that include the fixed effects estimator is that they easily extend to cases with multiple waves of panel data, such as research paper 5 (The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life).

The choice between the two approaches has spawned controversy in sociology during the last half a century (see Allison, 1990). In sociological literature in the early 1970s, change score methods were out of favor because of concerns about regression to the mean. However, later methodological papers suggest that concern about regression to the mean were exaggerated, and most methodologists generally advise the use of change score rather than the regressor variable method because it has other advantages (Allison, 1990; Johnson, 2005).

However, the most important issue to consider when choosing between the two approaches is the nature of the causal process that is assumed to generate the outcome (Johnson, 2005, p. 1065). The critical theoretical issue is the extent to which the outcome measured in a previous time period is assumed to have a direct causal effect on the outcome measured in a later period. When this is the case, the regressor variable method is more appropriate than change score methods because it includes the outcome measured in a previous period directly as an explanatory variable (Allison, 1990; Finkel, 1995).

In this thesis, the regressor variable method is used in one research paper, and change score methods, in the form of the fixed effects estimator, is used in another research paper depending on the empirical problem I am trying to address. In research paper 3 (Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark), which aims to estimate the extent to which time spent on paid work substitutes or complements volunteering, I use the regressor variable approach because I hypothesize that volunteer participation at a prior time point has a causal effect on volunteer participation at a later time point because of habit formation. In research paper 5 (The Individual Economic Returns to

Volunteering in Work Life), which aims to estimate the economic returns to volunteering, my co-authors and I use change score methods in the form of fixed effects regression because we are mainly concerned with selection into volunteering based on unobserved but time stable individual characteristics, such as innate ability or motivation.

Using Retrospective Items to Construct Panel Data with a Large Number of Waves

As already noted, a weakness of panel data is that people may choose to drop out of the survey, and, if the dropouts share certain characteristics, this will jeopardize the representativeness of the sample. Another weakness of using panel data for sociological analysis is that most available panel datasets have a limited number of waves, limiting the opportunity to address the extent to which the effect of the different factors vary across the life-cycle. One way to overcome this limitation, which I utilize in research paper 5 (The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life), is to construct panel data based on retrospective survey information. The retrospective component of the Danish Volunteer Survey asks people to recall past volunteer activities, making it possible to reconstruct people's history of volunteering based on their recollection. A disadvantage of this approach is that people may fail to recollect accurate information, and my co-author and I must rely on the assumption that people are able to recollect when they started to volunteer. The strength of using this retrospective component is that we are able to construct a panel dataset containing annual information about number of years of volunteer experience based on survey information and annual information about wages based on administrative register information in the 2004–2012 period. Because we have yearly information over an extended period of time, we can investigate not only the extent to which volunteer work experience affects wages but also how the effect of volunteer work experience changes during the course of people's work lives.

2.4. MEDIATION ANALYSIS

The aim of mediation analysis is to examine possible explanations for an effect of an explanatory variable on an outcome variable. Mediation analysis thus allows researchers to decompose the effect of an explanatory variable on an outcome variable into a direct and an indirect effect through another variable called a mediator (MacKinnon, Fairchild and Fritz, 2007; VanderWeele, 2015; Hayes, 2018).

In early research, mediation analysis was often conducted using the causal steps approach, also known as the Baron and Kenny approach (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Although later methodological studies have revealed a number of important shortcoming of this approach to mediation analysis (see Hayes, 2018), it remains a highly valuable heuristic device because it still illuminates the mode of thinking behind contemporary mediation analysis.

The causal steps approach involves four conditions. First, the explanatory variable must be significantly related to the outcome variable. Second, the explanatory variable must be significantly related to the proposed mediating variable. Third, the mediating variable must be significantly related to the outcome variable conditional on the explanatory variable. Fourth, the unconditional coefficient relating the explanatory variable to the outcome variable must be larger (in absolute value) than the coefficient relating the explanatory variable to the outcome variable conditional on the mediator. This strategy provides preliminary evidence that the effect of the explanatory variable on an outcome variable is in part or fully transmitted by a mediator variable. Unfortunately, however, the causal steps approach suffers shortcomings that make it unsuitable for contemporary mediation analysis. More specifically, it does not provide a coefficient that directly summarizes the indirect effect of the mediator, and it does not provide a way to test the significance of the indirect effect.

In contemporary social research, two methods are available in which mediation can be assessed: *The product of coefficients method* and *the difference in coefficients method* (see Hayes, 2018). The two methods are algebraically equivalent, and when ordinary least squares regression is used to calculate the coefficients, they yield the exact same results (MacKinnon, Fairchild and Fritz, 2007). Standard errors based on the delta method to test the significance of the indirect effects have been derived by Sobel (1982). However, the method proposed by Sobel assumes that the sampling distribution of the total and specific indirect effects are normal. However, in finite samples, this assumption is unlikely to be valid. As a consequence, Preacher and Hayes (2008) suggest that inferences about indirect effects be based on bootstrapped confidence intervals rather than standard errors based on the delta method.

In this thesis, I use mediation analysis based on both the product of coefficients method and the difference in coefficients method. In research paper 2 (The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004–2012), which aims to explain the extent to which an observed decline in volunteers' contributions of time in Denmark is explained by weakening organizational attachment, I use a serial mediation model based on the product of coefficients method to examine whether the decline in volunteers' contributions of time is mediated by a decline in volunteers' propensity to be members of the organizations for which they volunteer, which subsequently affects their propensity to serve on the board of directors. I use the product of coefficients method because the indirect effect cannot be calculated as a simple difference between two models when the effect is assumed to be transmitted through a series of mediators.

In Paper 4 (Secular and Religious Volunteering Among Immigrants and Natives it Denmark), which aims to examine the extent to which the participation gaps in secular and religious volunteering between immigrants and natives in Denmark is explained by differences in individual and social resources, I use the difference in coefficients method because the indirect effect of being a non-Western immigrant through the proposed mediators can be calculated as the difference between the coefficients of being a non-Western immigrant from a model with and a model without controls for the proposed mediation. Moreover, this analysis involved the comparison of effects between non-linear logistic regression models because participation in secular and religious volunteering are binary variables. This introduces additional complexity to mediation analysis because mediation analysis based on the difference in coefficients method involves the subtraction of effects from two different models, which in the case of logistic regression are not directly comparable (Mood, 2010). To address this issue, I use logistic regression based on the Karlson-Holm-Breen (KHB) correction (Karlson, Holm and Breen, 2012), which has recently been proposed as a tool for mediation analysis with binary outcome variables because the correction renders results from logistic regressions comparable across models (Breen, Karlson and Holm, 2013).

CHAPTER 3. THE RESEARCH PAPERS

Below, I provide references for the published versions of the research papers that comprise the heart of the thesis. To access the research articles, please refer directly to these sources or write me an email.[4]

3.1. WHERE TO GET THE RESEARCH PAPERS

Research paper 1: Qvist, H. P. Y. et al. (forthcoming). Trends in Volunteering in Scandinavia. In: Henriksen, L. S., Strømness K., Svedberg, L., *Civic Engagement in Scandinavia*. Springer.

Research paper 2: Qvist, H. P. Y., Henriksen, L. S., and Fridberg, T. (2018). The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004–2012. *European Sociological Review*, **34**, 589–601.

Research paper 3: Qvist, H. P. Y. (unpublished manuscript). Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark. Unpublished manuscript.

Research paper 4: Qvist, H. P. Y. (2018). Secular and Religious Volunteering Among Immigrants and Natives in Denmark. Acta Sociologica, **61**, 202–218.

Research paper 5: Qvist, H. P. Y. and Munk, M. D. (2018). The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life. *European Sociological Review*, **34**, 198–210.

3.2. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

In research paper 1 (Trends in Volunteering in Scandinavia), my co-authors and I aimed to describe and explain trends in volunteer participation and intensity over the last three decades in Scandinavia using high-quality harmonized survey data from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The results suggest that the overall levels of participation in volunteering are high and stable in the Scandinavian countries, with a small upward trend. In international comparison, the participation levels are high in all of the Scandinavian countries, but they are markedly higher in Norway and Sweden than in Denmark. In Sweden, the volunteers' contributions of time show a slight upward trend; in Norway the volunteers' contributions of time have remained stable; and Denmark has witnessed a decline. The explanatory analysis indicated that the gap

[4] Please find contact information on my personal website: http://hpqvist.dk

in the levels of volunteering between Sweden and Norway on one hand and Denmark on the other hand cannot be attributed to socio-demographic differences between the countries, as the gap is left unchanged when controlling for socio-demographic factors.

From these mainly descriptive contributions, we learn how volunteer participation and intensity have developed over time in Scandinavia, but the analysis is too general to explain trends within the countries. In research paper 2 (The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004–2012), my co-authors and I investigate in depth one possible explanation for the observed decline in volunteers' contributions of time in Denmark. The paper asks to what extent the observed decline in volunteers' contributions of time is explained by weakening organizational attachment measured by a decline in the volunteers' propensities to be members of the organizations for which they volunteer. This decline in the volunteers' propensities to be members of the organizations for which they volunteer is subsequently hypothesized to affect their propensity to undertake time-consuming tasks, such as serving on the board of directors. Our results suggest that approximately 20 percent of the decline in the volunteers' contributions of time can be attributed to a decline in the volunteers' propensities to volunteer as members. However, contrary to our hypothesis, the indirect effect of the decline in the volunteers' propensities to be members is not transmitted through a decline in their propensity to serve on a board of directors. This can be attributed to the fact that the share of volunteers who serve on a board of directors did not decline as steeply as the share of volunteers who are members of the organization in which they volunteer. These results indicate that the decline in the volunteers' contributions of time can mainly be attributed to an increase in so-called "peripheral volunteers" who volunteer without membership in the organization, rather than from a decline in contributed time from so-called "core volunteers" who serve on a board of directors. This probably reflects the fact that the demand for organizational "core" functions, such as a functional board of directors, remains relatively stable and that these core functions are inevitably time consuming, but the core volunteers receive less and less support from peripheral volunteers in running the organizations.

Overall, the findings suggest that the decline in volunteers' contributions of time is not explained by changes in people's socioeconomic resources or family life but instead by a process of weakening organizational attachment in which the ties between individual volunteers and the organizations erode. Similar developments toward weakening organizational attachment have previously been discovered in Norway (Wollebæk and Selle, 2003; Tranvik and Selle, 2007), Belgium (Hustinx, 2005), and the United States (Wuthnow, 1998). While some scholars have voiced concerns about this development (Wollebæk and Selle, 2003; Tranvik and Selle, 2007), other scholars have argued that this development should not necessarily be a cause of concern because the process of weakening organizational attachment mainly affects where and how people volunteer but not necessarily how much, as people may still volunteer equally much based on "loose connections" to the organizations (Wuthnow, 1998). However, our results contribute to these sociological debates by showing that an important consequence of the process of weakening organizational attachment is that volunteers contribute less of their time.

While the analysis in research paper 2 contributed to an explanation of aggregate trends in volunteer intensity over time, it was uninformative regarding dynamics at the individual level. In the third paper (Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark), I address the extent to which changes in time spent on paid work, operationalized as transitions between six labor market states (out of the labor force, unemployed, enrolled in education, working 1–30 hours, working 30–40 hours, and working 40+ hours), are associated with increases or decreases in volunteer participation and intensity. Surprisingly, the results suggest that changes in labor market states are not significantly associated with changes in volunteer participation; however, for volunteers working only part-time compared to full-time is associated with increased volunteer hours, while working overtime is associated with decreased volunteer hours—this is also true when important possible confounders, including occupational prestige and the availability of flexible working arrangements, are controlled for.

These results contribute to important sociological debates regarding the extent to which time spend on paid work substitutes or complements volunteering. Contrary to the social integration theory, the results suggest that people who are in the labor force are not, all else being equal, more likely to volunteer, and among volunteers, a decrease in work hours is associated with an increase in volunteer hours and an increase in work hours is conversely associated with an decrease in volunteer hours. Instead, the results support the time constraint theory, which emphasizes that time is a scarce resource, and people can only allocate as much time to volunteering as their work responsibilities permit (Robinson et al., 2016). The overall finding that time spent on paid work, all else being equal, substitutes volunteer time is also in line with neoclassical rational choice theory, which is favored by some economists. However, instead of time constraints, this theory emphasizes the role of the opportunity costs of time, referring to the theoretical (economic) value that is lost by making the choice to spend one's time on volunteering rather than on paid work (see Lee and Brudney, 2009). According to this theory, we should therefore expect a negative effect of wages on volunteer intensity. However, it turns out that wages, all else being equal, are positively associated with volunteer intensity, supporting my claim that the mechanism that explains why time spent on paid work substitutes volunteer time is that paid work time imposes time constraints on individuals rather than increases their opportunity costs.

In the fourth paper (Secular and Religious Volunteering Among Immigrants and Natives in Denmark), I investigate the extent to which differences in socioeconomic resources explain the participation gaps in secular and religious volunteering between non-Western immigrants and natives in Denmark. Controlling only for demographic factors, the results suggest that natives are approximately 17 percentage points more likely to participate in secular volunteering. However, the results suggest that differences in socioeconomic resources between the two groups explain over half this participation gap in secular volunteering. In addition, the results suggest that non-Western immigrants are significantly more likely to participate in religious volunteering. However, this participation gap in religious volunteering is completely explained by the higher levels of religiosity found among non-Western immigrants compared to natives.

In light of the large scale migration from the Global South that the Western countries have witnessed during the last three decades, the results contribute to important sociological debates about structural factors that prevent immigrants from reaching participation levels on par with the native Danish population. Previous studies emphasize that volunteering may act as an important stepping stone to integration for immigrants (Handy and Greenspan, 2009; Greenspan, Walk and Handy, 2018). However, the results indicate that it is mainly privileged immigrants, in terms of socioeconomic position, that are able to utilize the potential stepping stone to integration that volunteering can be. This implies that enabling immigrants with a less privileged socioeconomic position to reap the integration benefits of volunteering requires an initial structural lift to their socioeconomic position—for example, through education and labor market integration programs.

Finally, in the fifth paper (The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life), my co-author and I investigate the extent to which volunteer work experience yields economic returns for the individual in the paid labor market (Qvist and Munk, 2018). Our results suggest that an additional year of volunteer work experience yields an economic return of approximately 3.7 percent for labor market entrants, but the returns from volunteer work experience decline as a function of professional labor market experience. On these grounds, we argue that volunteer work experience can be helpful in terms of career advancement for labor market entrants and people in the early stages of their careers, but it is of no consequence for people with substantial professional labor market experience.

These results corroborate previous findings that suggest that volunteer work experience can be helpful in terms of career advancement (Ruiter and De Graaf, 2009). However, we contribute to the literature by showing that the benefits only apply to labor market entrants and people in the early stages of their work lives (Qvist and Munk, 2018). Our study also advances the debate about economic returns from volunteering by suggesting that the returns from volunteer work experience depend on labor market experience, and not on age per se. This finding may be interpreted as indicating that volunteer work experience may be particularly beneficial for people with fewer resources, in this case due to an absence of labor market experience.

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This thesis set out to shed new light on possible explanations for the persistent social inequality in volunteering behavior. To approach this task, five empirical research questions about individual and social resources as causes and benefits were addressed in five self-contained research papers. In this concluding chapter, I will synthesize the insights from these five individual research papers. Based on this synthesis and the results from existing research, I will critically discuss the explanatory power of the resource theory of volunteering regarding the persistent social inequality in volunteering behavior.

During the course of this discussion, I will argue—based on empirical evidence that suggests that the resource poor receive higher levels of actual benefits of volunteering if they volunteer—that volunteering is more attractive to the resource poor than to the resource rich. This is the exact opposite of what the resource theory assumes. On these grounds, I will argue that the rational choice explanation that the resource theory provides for the decision to volunteer is unpersuasive because people seemingly make the decision to volunteer independently of the private benefits of volunteering. This indicates that rational considerations related to the private benefits of volunteering plays a limited role in terms of explaining the decision to volunteer. This is probably because the decision to volunteer is guided as much by the individual's normative beliefs as by rational considerations. However, I will proceed to argue that once the individual has made the decision to volunteer, the subsequent decision about how much time to contribute seems to be largely guided by rational considerations related to time constraints due to employment and family obligations.

To substantiate the above argument, I will first discuss the need to move beyond universal theories of volunteering based on rational choice. Towards that end, I draw on Boudon's concept of *ordinary rationality*, which emphasizes that the forward-looking and instrumental rationality that is implied by rational choice is not the only type of human rationality (Boudon, 2011). I then proceed to discuss these different types of rationality, as well as the role of imperfect information and experience, in rational choice (Hedström and Swedberg, 1996; Breen, 1999). Subsequently, I move on to discuss two important empirical issues in volunteering research that might be better understood by applying a broader conception of rationality and by taking the role of imperfect information and experience into account. Finally, I provide some concluding remarks and discuss policy implications.

4.1. BEYOND UNIVERSAL THEORIES BASED ON RATIONAL CHOICE

The importance of the empirical work conducted by Wilson and Musick, both together and in collaboration with others, during the last four decades can hardly be overstated. My aim in the following is therefore not to criticize these valuable empirical studies. Instead, my aim is to illustrate some adverse theoretical and empirical consequences of Musick and Wilson's (2008) recent influential attempt to restate their previous workings into a resource theory of volunteering that is consistent with rational choice.

My motivation for this endeavor is threefold. First, I argue that the resource theory relies on an overly strong assumption that is inconsistent with empirical evidence. Second, the resource theory has inspired a massive outpouring of empirical studies. However, most of these studies do little more than corroborate that people's current individual and social resources are statistically associated with the decision to volunteer based on static empirical models. In other words, most empirical studies do not actually access the explanatory power of the resource theory against empirical evidence but merely re-describe the empirical regularity from which it takes its point of departure, leading to a tendency towards theoretical stagnation. The resource theory is not solely to blame for how it is applied in empirical studies, but I think its universal and static nature is unhelpful in terms of sparking the theoretical imagination of sociologists concerned with volunteering. Third, I argue that if we want to explain rather than re-describe the persistent social inequality in volunteering then we need to move beyond static empirical models that assume that people's volunteering behavior is explained solely by their current individual and social resources. Instead, I argue that literature that emphasizes the role of people's current resources when they intentionally weigh the costs and benefits of volunteering (Musick and Wilson, 2008) should be bridged with literature that emphasizes the role of unconscious habitual behavior due to family socialization (Janoski and Wilson, 1995; Mustillo, Wilson and Lynch, 2004; Bekkers, 2007) and practical volunteering experience (Janoski, Musick and Wilson, 1998).

The need for more fine-grained theories becomes particularly evident when we want to explain trends over time. This is due to the fact that we cannot explain the actual development in a specific context during a specific time period if we do have a theory that explicates the relevant mechanisms that are behind a statistical association and view the relevance of these mechanisms in relation to the specific context and time period (Blossfeld, 1996). In this respect, the resource theory is theoretically underdeveloped because its universal nature provides us with a framework that offer little information regarding how to analyze changes over time within a specific context and time period. A similar critique was recently put forward by Smith and Wang (2016, p. 635), who rightfully argue that the resource theory "…fundamentally asserts, though usually implicitly not explicitly, that *mere possession* of or access to more resources or capital actively promotes use of these to do more volunteering. Unfortunately, R-CT [the resource theory] gives no clear *theoretical* definition of what factors/traits are resources in a given society at a given historical time period…"

[Authors' own emphases]. This is a critical shortcoming because recent studies show that the effects of different resource factors are changing over time. For example, the association between educational level and volunteer participation appears to have changed in recent years. Thus, empirical research from the Netherlands (van Ingen and Dekker, 2011) and Denmark (Frederiksen, Henriksen and Qvist, 2014; Qvist *et al.*, forthcoming) suggests that the association has declined over time. Because the resource theory argues that the reason education is connected to volunteering is that it makes it easier to face the demands of engaging in productive activities, one would have to argue that the role of education in terms of making it easier to face the demands of volunteering has declined over time in Denmark and the Netherlands. However, such an argument would be inconsistent with empirical evidence that suggests that volunteering has become increasingly professionalized in recent years, which in turn suggests that the skills and competencies gained from education are more important than ever for getting involved in volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003). A more plausible explanation for the recent development in the Netherlands and Denmark is that education has become a less effective signal of a dominant status position because educational expansion has made higher education a less scarce good. To explain this particular development in Denmark and the Netherlands, the dominant status theory thus seems like a much stronger candidate than the resource theory.

Another related problem that the dominant status theory seems useful for explaining is how high-status groups might use volunteering to maintain a dominant status position. For example, a very interesting study from the Netherlands suggests that volunteering has become an effective compensation strategy in the intergenerational transmission of occupational status for younger cohorts (van Houten, Gesthuizen and Wolbers, 2013). This suggests that as the importance of the role played by more traditional means of attaining status declines, such as higher education, individuals who belong to high-status groups might increasingly use participation in volunteering strategically to gain or maintain a dominant status position. On these grounds, I think it is unreasonable that the dominant status theory is often discussed in contemporary sociology of volunteering discourse as being merely an archaic predecessor of the resource theory (Wilson, 2000; Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010; Einolf and Chambré, 2011). Thus, to explain certain sociological problems in specific contexts and time periods, the dominant status theory may provide more convincing explanations compared to the resource theory.

However, this does not imply that the dominant status theory is suitable as a general theory of volunteering, as seems to be argued by Smith and Wang (2016). In essence, to constitute a universal theory of volunteering, the dominant status theory, like the resource theory, also has to assume that people decide to volunteer to reap private benefits—Smith and Wang (2016) just define the exact nature of these benefits by assuming that people universally strive to acquire and maintain power, wealth, and prestige. Thus, Smith and Wang (2016, pp. 637–638) replace the already overly strong assumption of the resource theory with an even stronger assumption by defining the exact nature of the benefits of volunteering: "…particular factors become resources in a given place and time when they are associated with dominant statuses. Dominant statuses can now be defined in more detail as factors or characteristics of individuals in a given society/culture at a given historical time period that facilitate the individual's (or family's) acquisition and maintenance of power, wealth, income, prestige…". The above quotation continues with a very long list of specific things and social behaviors that are identified as facilitating a dominant status position (for the full list; please refer to Smith and Wang, 2016, p. 638). This list, according to the authors themselves, covers: "Essentially every aspect of human life*…"* (Smith and Wang, 2016, p. 638), which explicates the heroic but unrealistic nature of the task of defining the exact benefits of volunteering.

In my view, the dominant status theory and the resource theory can both be classified as rational choice theories because they both assume that people chase private benefits. However, the theories differ in the way they define the benefits of volunteering. The resource theory can be classified as a so-called thin rational choice theory because it refrains from defining the exact nature of the benefits people are assumed to pursue but instead relies on a small set of strong assumptions about the stability and distribution of these benefits. In contrast, the dominant status theory can be classified as thick rational choice theory because it specifies the exact nature of people's goals, in this case the acquisition and maintenance of power, wealth, income, and prestige (for a discussion of the distinction between thick and thin rational choice models; see Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997).

Since both theories are based on the core idea of rational choice, namely that people seek to acquire or maintain private benefits, one would expect the authors to provide evidence that supports the proposed link between people's volunteering behavior and the private benefits of volunteering. If this between people's volunteering behavior and the private benefits of volunteering is missing it seriously challenges the fruitfulness of applying rational choice theory; or as Boudon more starkly argues (1998, p. 818), "…one *cannot* apply RCT [Rational Choice Theory] notably in the cases where an actor does X because he believes in Z and that Z implies his doing X independently of the consequences of X*"* [my emphasis]. Notably, little empirical evidence supports the idea that people's volunteering behavior is linked to the private benefits of volunteering. On the contrary, the empirical evidence my co-author and I present in research paper 5 (The Individual Economic Returns to Volunteering in Work Life) suggests that the economic returns to volunteering are insignificant for people in the middle of their working lives—the *exact time period* in the life-cycle when people are *most likely to volunteer* (van Ingen, 2008). This suggests that people are most likely to volunteer during the time of their life in which they do not receive economic returns at all. Moreover, there has been a decline in volunteer participation and intensity among the young in recent years in Denmark (Bonnesen, 2018; Qvist, Henriksen and Fridberg, 2018)—the exact time period in the life-cycle where the economic returns to volunteering are greatest. In sum, empirical evidence suggests that people in Denmark volunteer irrespective of the economic returns from volunteer work experience.

However, economic returns are only one of many possible benefits of volunteering, and rational choice theories of volunteering can always be salvaged by reference to the possible existence of other types of benefits. However, as indicated in section 1.2, which discussed state of the art research findings on the benefits of volunteering, an increasingly large body of evidence suggests that low-resource social groups—for example, people with limited labor market experience (Qvist and Munk, 2018), the disabled (Morrow-Howell et al., 2003), the socially isolated (Musick, Herzog and House, 1999), and immigrants (Handy and Greenspan, 2009; Greenspan, Walk and Handy, 2018)—receive relatively greater actual benefits if they volunteer. For traditional rational choice theory as applied in the resource theory of volunteering, this remains a paradox.

4.2. ORDINARY RATIONALITY, IMPERFECT INFORMATION, AND EXPERIENCE

Based on empirical evidence, I argued in the above section that people seemingly decide to participate in volunteering irrespective of the private benefits of volunteering. This indicates that the behavioral model of rational choice, which assumes that people are forward looking and benefit oriented, provides too narrow a framework for explaining volunteering behavior. This calls for a wider conception of rationality without ruling out the possibility that some social groups in particular time periods may intentionally weigh the costs and benefits of volunteering. For example, specific types of volunteering, such as homework assistance, is typically carried out by high resource individuals guided by benefit-oriented motivation, such as improving their résumés (Grubb, 2016). Moreover, empirical evidence also suggests that college students are more likely to volunteer in countries with a higher signaling value of volunteering in the educational system and the labor market (Handy et al., 2010).

A wider conception of rationality is found in Boudon's concept of ordinary rationality (Boudon, 2011). Boudon (2011) was critical of rational choice theory that treats individuals as rational but in the specific forward-looking and instrumental sense. However, he was also critical towards positions that treat individuals' decisions as irrational or as if they were completely determined by culture, social norms, or their habitus (Bourdieu, 1998). Instead, drawing on Weber, Boudon (1998) argued in favor of a broader conception of rationality in which it is acknowledged that: "…social actors should be considered rational in the sense that they have strong reasons of believing what they believe, of doing what they do, and so forth" (Boudon, 1998, p. 825); and, as Boudon (1998, pp. 825–826) continues to explain: "In particular cases, these reasons can be realistically treated as dealing with the difference between costs and benefits of alternative lines of action. In other cases, they cannot: in particular when a decision or an action rests upon normative or cognitive beliefs, the reasons will generally not belong exclusively to this type." The above quotation implies that rational choice may be a powerful model for explaining some types of human behavior, but it cannot be held as a general theory of all types of human behavior.

Notably, rational choice cannot convincingly be applied to explain problems in which it cannot be empirically substantiated that people's decisions are actually related to the outcomes of their actions (Boudon, 2011).

Moreover, even in situations where a connection between people's actions and the outcomes of their actions can be established, contemporary rational choice theorists emphasize that people act in accordance with their beliefs about the consequences of their actions in comparison to other possible courses of actions (Elster, 1986; Hedström and Swedberg, 1996; Boudon, 1998; Breen, 1999). This is due to the fact that information about the actual benefits and costs is always imperfect in real-life situations. These insights have brought the role of imperfect information to the top of the research agenda for sociologists who draw on rational choice theory (Hedström and Swedberg, 1996). Moreover, contemporary rational choice theorists also emphasize that people's beliefs about the consequences of present actions are shaped by their past experiences (Elster, 1983; Breen, 1999). This implies that people's beliefs about the costs and benefits of volunteering may be altered over time depending on the degree to which they have had positive or negative experiences with volunteering in the past.

Accordingly, if we avoid assuming *a priori* that people act according to a specific rationality, it becomes paramount for empirical analysis to understand the rationality that guides people's actions in relation to their beliefs and opportunities within a specific context and time period—as Blossfeld (Blossfeld, 1996, p. 183) excellently put it: "The important theoretical issue for empirical analyses is therefore not whether social norms (culture) or instrumental rationality provide the motivation for actions, but how they can be conceptionally integrated so that we are better able to understand real life situations."

In light of these theoretical concerns, I will argue in the following that current empirical research on volunteering can be improved in relation to two key issues. The first is concerned with the nature of the individual decision process that results in the individual's observed volunteering behavior. The second is concerned with the need to extend empirical models that only include people's current individual and social resources to include parameters that captures people's social backgrounds and their volunteer biographies, if we want to explain the persistent social inequality in volunteering.

The Decision to Participate versus the Decision Regarding How Much Time to Spend

Most studies rely on binary choice models because they only analyze the decision to volunteer, which is a binary outcome variable. Other studies that also include information about the volunteers' contributions of time have relied almost exclusively on the Tobit model (Musick, Wilson and Bynum, 2000; Rotolo and Wilson, 2004, 2006; Taniguchi, 2006; Brown and Ferris, 2007; DeVoe and Pfeffer, 2007; Einolf, 2011; Marshall and Taniguchi, 2012; Nesbit, 2012). The Tobit model is based on the strong assumption that the explanatory variables affect the decision to participate and the decision regarding how much time to spend participating *in the same direction* and *with the same magnitude* (Forbes and Zampelli, 2011).

The theoretical idea behind the Tobit model is that the outcome variable may be conceptualized as a latent variable, which is realized when a latent propensity exceeds a threshold value. For many empirical problems, this is a sensible model. For example, the Tobit model was originally developed to explain household expenditure on durable goods such as cars, major household appliances, or furniture (Tobin, 1958, p. 31). For such household expenditure problems, the Tobit model is sensible because the costs of buying a car, for example, is well known to the individual. Accordingly, it is sensible to assume that the decision to buy a car is realized once the individual believes that the benefits of owning the car exceeds the well-known costs of buying it. In such a case, the decision regarding how much money to spend can be viewed as being made simultaneously with the decision to buy the car—this implies that both decisions are subject to the same budget constraints.

However, as I have previously argued in a Danish language journal (Qvist, 2015) that we are dealing with a different kind of problem when we are trying to explain individuals' volunteering behavior because the decision to volunteer and the decision regarding how much time to spend volunteering are not necessarily made simultaneously. Thus, in my view, it is oftentimes more reasonable to assume that the individual decides to participate—in many cases because they are asked—and then subsequently, on a continues basis, decides how much time to contribute based on rational considerations about the actual time costs.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the individual possesses imperfect information about the actual costs of volunteering at the time when she or he decides to volunteer. Of course, people who decide to volunteer possess some information about the minimum time requirement before they make the decision to volunteer but few would claim that people possess full information about the time requirement at the time they join. However, as the individual starts to engage in the volunteer activities, the costs of volunteering become known to the individual with greater accuracy. This implies that we are dealing with an empirical problem in which there is a discrepancy between the amount of information that the individual possesses when she or he makes the decision to volunteer and the amount of information she or he possess when subsequently deciding how much time to contribute.

The above considerations about the individual's actual decision process has two important implications. First, it provides a theoretical substantiation of recent methodological research that suggests that two-part models that bifurcate the decision to volunteer and the decision regarding the amount of time to contribute into two separate parts usually provide a better model fit than the Tobit model (Forbes and Zampelli, 2011). Moreover, it suggests that it is more meaningful to imply rational choice theory to explain the decision regarding the amount of time to contribute because the individual can be assumed to possess more accurate information about the costs of volunteering allowing for rational considerations about how much time to spend on the activity. This is in line with the results from research paper 3 (Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark), which suggests that the decision regarding the amount of time to contribute is explained by factors that limit people's free time, such as employment and family obligations. However, it should be noted that previous research suggests that this decision is positively associated with religiosity, for example, which indicates that normative beliefs might also affect the decision (Forbes and Zampelli, 2014).

Intergenerational Transmission, the Role of Past Experience, and State Dependence

The previous section suggested that the decision regarding the amount of time spent contributing to volunteering may be less complex to explain compared to the decision to volunteer because it appears to be guided primarily by the individual's rational considerations related to time constraints. However, other than arguing that the decision to volunteer remains a paradox for rational choice theory because it is appears to be unrelated to the private benefits of volunteering, it did not provide a discussion of how the decision to volunteer can be explained.

To approach this question, which lies at the heart of the sociology of volunteering, I start out by noting that empirical models that only include factors that capture the individual's current individual and social resources provide relatively low coefficients of determination. The work of my co-authors and I in research paper 1 (Trends in Volunteering in Scandinavia) is not an exception to this point. The fact that the individual's current individual and social resources only partly explain the decision to volunteer probably indicates that the fact that people's decision to participate in volunteering is also guided by their normative beliefs about the value of volunteering. One particular type of rationality contained in Boudon's concept of ordinary rationality, which accommodates actions guided by normative beliefs, is *anxiological rationality.* According to Boudon (1998, p. 825), this concept refers to the case in which "…actors do X not because they expect any desirable consequence, but because they are convinced that X is good, since it is grounded on strong reasons." This opens the possibility that the resource rich could be more likely to volunteer not only because their resources make it easier to face the demands of volunteering but also because they have strong reasons to believe that it is the right thing to do. A belief that is grounded by strong reasons may in turn instill a sense of moral obligation to volunteer in the individual.

Feelings of moral obligation to volunteer may even be a relatively more important cause of volunteering than individual and social resources within typical care areas of volunteering (Overgaard, Petrovski and Hermansen, 2018). However, it is important to note that the feeling of moral obligation to volunteer is often triggered by being asked to volunteer, and people with high levels of individual and social resources are more likely to be asked. However, people with a high educational level and a high occupational status are often busy people, and, as their life goes back to the grind, they are inevitably faced with practical considerations related to how much time they actually have on their hands. As emphasized by Freeman (1997, p. S140) "…volunteering is something that people feel morally obliged to do when asked, but which they would just as soon let somebody else do." This implies that the sense of moral obligation that people feel calls for their participation but does not affect the amount of time they contribute. In research paper 2 (The Consequences of Weakening Organizational Attachment for Volunteering in Denmark, 2004–2012), this led my co-authors and I to argue that an indicator variable that captured people's sense of moral obligation to volunteer could be used as an exclusion restriction in a selection model.

In addition to the importance of feelings of moral obligations in terms of explaining the decision to volunteer it is also important to capture individuals' embodied practices through past volunteer experience (Janoski, Musick and Wilson, 1998) because if these are not accounted for in our models we might overestimate the importance of people's current resources. This overestimation of the importance of people's current resources is in part already exposed in the literature by studies that use panel data to estimate fixed effects regression models. For example, Lancee and Radl (2014) use the German Socioeconomic Panel to show that the effect of changes in people's educational level on changes in people's propensity to volunteer is not even significant. A previous Danish study based on the panel component of the Danish Volunteer Survey provided similar results (Frederiksen and Møberg, 2014). Such findings suggest that the statistical associations between having higher education and the propensity to volunteer that were observed in previous studies are largely spurious due to unobserved heterogeneity (Frederiksen and Møberg, 2014; Lancee and Radl, 2014).

However, Lancee and Radl (2014) rightfully acknowledge that a limitation of their analysis is that they cannot rule out the possibility that there is a long term effect of receiving education that is not captured by their fixed effects model, which assumes a contemporaneous effect (Lancee and Radl, 2014, p. 848). However, studies that use static fixed effects models to examine the effect of one or more resource factors rarely acknowledge that their models assume that persistence in people's propensity to volunteer is driven solely by unobserved heterogeneity between individuals. In other words, static fixed effects models assume that the sole reason that an individual's volunteer participation at a prior point in time is strongly associated with the same individual's volunteer participation at a later point in time is that some unobserved characteristics affect the individual's volunteer participation at both time points. However, in my view, there are strong theoretical arguments in favor of the hypothesis that volunteer participation at a previous time point will have a genuine causal effect on volunteer participation at a later time point—for example, adopting the role of a volunteer often becomes an important part of person's identity (Matsuba, Hart and Atkins, 2007), people may develop specific civic skills that are transferable to other volunteering activities (Brady, Verba and Schlozman, 1995), or people form the habit of volunteering through practical experience (Janoski, Musick and Wilson, 1998).

The difference between these two causes of persistence in people's behavior is commonly referred to as *spurious* and *true state dependence* (Halaby, 2004). True state dependence thus refers to the case where "…past experience has genuine behavioral effect in the sense that an otherwise identical individual who did not experience the event would behave differently in the future than an individual who experienced the event" (Heckman, 1981, p. 91). In research paper 3 (Does Time Spent on Paid Work Substitute or Complement Volunteering? Evidence from Two-wave Panel Data from Denmark), I hypothesized that the reason that people who participated in volunteering in Time 1 were 27.5 percentage points more likely to volunteer in Time 2, after controlling for their current levels of individual and social resources, could be attributed to a genuine causal effect. This led to my preference for the regressor variable method instead of change score methods, as the regressor variable method is more appropriate given that my hypothesis regarding the presence of true state dependence is correct. Unfortunately, an important limitation of this study is that I am not able to support this hypothesis empirically because it is not possible to distinguish between true and spurious state dependence with only two waves of panel data (Morgan and Winship, 2015). I must therefore leave to future research an empirical examination that addresses the extent to which the persistence in people's propensity to volunteer is due to true state dependence, as I expect.

4.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Government policies aimed at stimulating the voluntary sector are often based on the erroneous assumption that active voluntary participation is exempt from social inequality. However, more than half a decade of sociological research testifies to the contrary, as people with higher levels of individual and social resources are found to be more likely to volunteer than people with fewer resources across context and time periods. The resource theory explains this empirical regularity by arguing that volunteering is more attractive to the resource rich than the resource poor because it is less costly for the resource rich to reap the same private benefits from volunteering.

However, in this thesis, I challenge this argument. Based on empirical evidence that suggests that the resource poor receive greater benefits if they volunteer, I argue that volunteering is more attractive to the resource poor than to the resource rich. As a consequence, I argue that the rational choice based explanation for the persistent social inequality in volunteering provided by the resource theory comprises an unpersuasive explanation because people seemingly choose to volunteer, or choose not to, independent of the private benefits of volunteering. However, adding to the complexity, I also suggest that once the individual has made the decision to volunteer, the decision regarding how much time to spend is largely guided by rational considerations related to time constraints.

Recasting the conventional wisdom regarding the "attractiveness" of volunteering comes with two important policy implications. First, it is critical that politicians and policy makers are aware that social policies might have different impacts on the size of the volunteer work force and voluntary labor supply. Accordingly, labor market policies that, for example, increases normal work hours might have little or no effect on the size of the volunteer work force but a negative effect on voluntary labor supply. This is due to the fact that time spent on paid work substitutes the amount of time that the volunteers contribute but has little or no effect on their propensity to volunteer. In contrast, educational reforms might have a positive effect on the size of the volunteer work force but little or no effect on voluntary labor supply.

Second, the resource theory implies that the most effective way to increase the size of the volunteer work force is to introduce social policies that aim to increase the resource poor's current levels of resources, since this would make it less costly for them to reap the private benefits of volunteering. However, I think that the persistent nature of social inequality in volunteering suggests that there is limit to what can be achieved through this strategy. This implies that educational and labor market reforms are necessary but probably not sufficient in terms of expanding the volunteer work force because the causes of the persistent social inequality in volunteering are of a more deep rooted nature than the resource theory suggests. Key to addressing this issue further is the examination of whether the observed persistence in the propensity to volunteer for the same individual over time is due to spurious or true state dependence. More specifically, if the persistence in people's volunteer participation over time is due to true state dependence, then this implies that there is a limit to what can be achieved by providing the individual with more resources, since an important cause of people's current volunteer participation is their volunteer experience. This further implies that if current non-volunteers are to be turned into volunteers, then it is of paramount importance to break their current pattern of non-participation—for example, through social programs that introduce non-volunteers to the practice of volunteering.

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SUMMARY

Baseret på fem selvstændige forskningspapirer bidrager denne ph.d.-afhandling i sociologi med ny viden om årsager til og fordele af frivilligt arbejde. På baggrund af en unik kombination af longitudinelle surveydata af høj kvalitet sammenkørt med danske registerdata – analyseret ved hjælp af avancerede kvantitative metoder – besvarer afhandlingen centrale spørgsmål som: Hvordan har deltagelse i og tidsforbrug på frivilligt arbejde udviklet sig over tid i Danmark og resten af Skandinavien? Er folk der har travlt på arbejdsmarkedet mere eller mindre tilbøjelige til at arbejde frivilligt – og bruger de mere eller mindre tid? Hvordan ser det ud med ikke-vestlige indvandreres deltagelse i frivilligt arbejde i Danmark? Kan erfaring fra frivilligt arbejde være karrierefremmende i tilstrækkelig grad til, at man opnår en højere løn på arbejdsmarkedet?

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